

# **U.S. EPA West Oakland Residential Lead Assessment CAG Meeting**

## **March 14, 2011**

### **ATTENDEES:**

EPA: Leana Rosetti  
Steve Calanog

EPA Contractor: Sara Dwight/Ecology&Environment  
Other attendees: Vic Johnson  
Maggie O'Donnell  
Tony Diamantidis  
Colin Foard, Office of Congresswoman Barbara Lee

CAG Members: Brian Beveridge  
Eric Gerrick  
Kathy Webster  
Gabrielle Keane  
Ellen Parkinson  
Brent Bucknum  
Frances Watson  
John Schweizer/Technical Assistant

### **Lead Cleanup Presentation**, Steve Calanog, U.S. EPA

#### **Status of Contracts**

The main Project Construction Contract to treat soil and restore yards has been awarded. This contract will use local labor and resources to the maximum extent possible.

- Contractor: SFS Chemical Safety, Inc. (SFS) out of Emeryville
  - Partnering with civil environmental engineering firm
  - Women owned small business
  - Consulted on many community based projects
  - Will take guidance/directives from EPA, based on EPA project goals
  - Introducing SFS personnel:
    - Project Director: Maggie O'Donnell. President of the company. As director of a local non-profit has organized and managed multiple community-based cleanup and planting projects
    - Project Manager: Tony Diamantidis. Extensive experience in environmental technology and managing large environmental projects
    - Project Engineer: Vic Johnson. Has over 40 years experience in remediation and environmental engineering work
    - Project Liaison: Jim Marshall, Attorney. Extensive experience with community involvement in federally funded programs
  - Project Plan is expected to be completed next week.
  - Field office should be operational this spring.
  - One reason this company (SFS) was selected was that they are local, will be adaptable, accessible to the community, etc.
    - Be responsive to the community
    - Utilize local resources

- Minimize environmental impact
- Use green technologies
- Provide uninterrupted project oversight
- Provide flawless tracking and reporting
- Obtain all necessary equipment and materials
- Establish on-site command post/field office
- Complete project within 24 Months

**Question:** We are the first residential community to get this type of remediation (calcium-phosphate treatment). What is the contractor's direct experience with this type of remediation?

**EPA:** This remediation is new to a residential setting but has been successfully applied in industrial/military settings. SFS has environmental consulting/remediation experience that is convincing enough that they'd be able to implement the calcium phosphate remedy. The idea is for the remedy not to be too sophisticated and to be something that communities can implement themselves. We'd like to share the remediation technology with as many people as possible. So while SFS and EPA have not done this specifically in a residential context, we are confident they can implement the remediation successfully.

**Question:** Has SFS worked in a neighborhood setting before?

**SFS:** Yes, we have done many municipal community based cleanup projects. Ms. O'Donnell has also worked for a non profit that did these types of projects. The testing, mitigation, neutralization, etc. will still be performed by EPA.

**Question:** I haven't been to the last few meetings, and the last I heard, the method had not been selected. What is the method that has been selected?

**EPA:** Based on project objectives, a remedy was selected that will 1) reduce threat of lead exposure to humans, especially 0-5 years, 2) implement project with least amount of environmental damage possible, 3) utilize to the maximum extent practical local resources. A number of remedial options were evaluated, and metals immobilization using calcium phosphate was selected as the remedial method that best meets project objectives. Calcium phosphate converts toxic lead species to non-toxic lead species that won't pose a threat to humans, especially children. Lab results show you can reduce bioavailability of lead in soil through addition of calcium phosphate. The cost is lower compared to other alternatives such as dig and haul, and there is no environmental impact to other communities.

**Question:** How is the calcium phosphate mixed into the soil?

**EPA:** We use a mechanized rototiller to till it in. The calcium phosphate remedy is implemented using the TLC approach (treat, lock, cover) – we treat the soil (which begins the process of transforming toxic lead into non-toxic lead species). Then we put a cap on the top of the treated soil (reducing the exposure pathway between humans and the soil that had the lead in it). So the remedy really consists of two technologies. The cover will be a 3-inch layer of clean material that the resident selects and can be mulch, planter beds, sod, gravel, etc.

**Question:** Is the plan still to treat the top 18 inches of soil?

**EPA:** It is unlikely that we'll be able to get a rototiller that will go more than 6-8 inches deep. The original estimate of 18 inches deep was based on a rototiller mounted on a backhoe. We will remove whatever the top layer of the yard is to get to the soil. Then we will have to level the yard. Probably by the end of the treatment, we will end up getting down to 12 inches with treatment, removal, and then a new cap. This is the plan right now; however, once we get started we'll see how deep we can get.

**Question:** What will you do about potential underground utilities like gas lines?

**EPA:** We will do underground/utility line surveys. We'll take precautions to make sure we don't hit or break underground utilities.

**Question:** One of the houses on Center Street had the highest concentrations of lead about 1-1.5 feet down. A general rule of thumb is that a property owner can dig down to approximately 3 feet. Have you thought about that in your remedy design?

**EPA:** Yes, we've thought about it and there are trade-offs. This community is in the oldest part of Oakland; there may be contamination at depth. The main goal of this project is to reduce exposure to children. For people who treat their yards and then wish to dig deeper than was treated, we will explain the risks and how to mitigate exposure. EPA doesn't want to impose restrictions on people who may want to dig deeper into potential contamination, put additions on their houses, etc. EPA can provide homeowners with enough information to know the risks. Also, calcium phosphate continues to work even if more lead continues to fall into the soil. EPA acknowledges they may not meet everyone's needs but the most important issue is that there is lead in the top few inches of soil and that kids are being exposed.

**Question:** Let's say you dig down far, past the treatment zone, and 10 years later you want to sell your house. Will you have to disclose that you've dug deeper than the remediation?

**EPA:** It is better to have the treatment done than not. If you dug deeper and that soil was exposed, it would be no different than most other yards in Oakland, and so there isn't anything different that you need to disclose. Also, hopefully in 10 years people will know that they can treat their own yards for lead and find a phosphate source themselves.

**Question:** Will homeowners have the option to go deeper if they want?

**EPA:** Homeowners can't pay EPA to have extra work done. EPA is coming in to mitigate the immediate risk that is on the surface now and the yards are being remediated for free.

**Question:** Will gardening be safe? What about carrots that go deeper than 6 inches?

**EPA:** Plants and root vegetables take up approximately 1-5% of what's available to them per growing season. So if you have 100 ppm lead in the soil, the carrot could potentially take up to 5% of that lead into the plant. Does that level of lead pose a threat to humans/children? EPA hasn't yet found information that it could present a potential for harm. The primary risk isn't what has been absorbed into the root vegetable but is the soil that would still be stuck to the vegetable. So make sure you wash the vegetable well to reduce risk. Also, raised planter beds will be offered to people that want them.

As part of the AMCO investigation, fruits and vegetables were tested in yards that had the highest lead levels near the AMCO site. They found that the highest levels of lead were from unwashed fruits and vegetables.

**Resident:** Green leafy vegetables were found to uptake lead.

**EPA:** We haven't found evidence that the lead taken up in the plant is harmful to human health but, but to reduce risk, raised beds would probably be the safest way to grow vegetables.

**Question:** EPA said that houses with peeling paint wouldn't be treated. Is that still the case? What if you can't afford to fix/re-paint your house?

**EPA:** Yes that is still the case. Peeling paint will still need to be addressed before treatment. EPA will talk to Alameda County about their lead abatement program and try to work something out in terms of financial assistance.

**Question:** Is it true that EPA isn't setting any limitations on use of property when the remediation is done? Will EPA help residents come up with protocols for soil handling? Can I still take my soil to the dump?

**Answer:** EPA can't predict whether soil can be taken to the dump because remediation levels for lead are dropping all over the country. We don't think soil from this neighborhood (from digging foundations or other yard work) would be treated any differently from any other house in the Bay Area. The TCLP laboratory analysis measures how much lead could leach out of soil and get to groundwater, if that soil was in a landfill. Based on the results of the TCLP test, at certain levels, soil can be characterized as a hazardous waste. The TCLP test has been performed on soil from

West Oakland yards and the soil doesn't qualify as hazardous waste. It would go to the landfill as soil with high lead levels but is not considered hazardous waste.

- Small Contracts – 2 have been awarded
  - Master Design Concept - Andrews Chang Design
    - Will develop conceptual designs for residents to make decisions on restoration
    - Draft designs – end of March
    - Plan to have designs available in the field office – residents can come by, look at them, talk to EPA
  - Community Messaging – S.O.U.R.C.E Studios (affiliated with Operation Paydirt and Fundred)
    - Assist and support with community messaging on this project
    - Kick-off meeting with EPA this Thursday
    - What happens in this community affects other communities – want to share information with other communities who may have similar issues.
    - EPA has set up a Facebook page to get information out about this project. It's a way to update the community on what's been happening on a day-by-day basis. Search for US EPA West Oakland Lead Project
  - Film Documentary
    - Not an EPA film – designed to show community working together
    - Not awarded yet
    - EPA is exploring other contracting options

**Question:** When you're talking about making a film, you're talking about 150 homes and you need community participation. We want to make sure cameras aren't in places they shouldn't be, and we'd like community input on who is filming. Releases should be required of those who allow themselves to be filmed.

**EPA:** We want to capture the whole story of the community interaction, the story from the community about what's been going on in the community. EPA has a say in who makes the film since they are paying for it, and will choose someone that uses proper procedures.

**Resident:** We expect to see whole spectrum of experiences in this film, including questions of community as well as the process, so that other people who watch it will have an idea of what they're getting into if they want to do it.

**EPA:** Residential lead is not an uncommon problem – the fears and feelings of this community are likely to be felt by other communities all over. It is valuable to share this experience and its lessons through a media such as a film, not just by writing a report.

Throughout the remediation, EPA is very interested in hearing what residents want and their opinions. Steve Calanog plans to be in the community in the office trailer almost every day and very accessible to the public. Community members are encouraged to stop by with questions.

**Question:** What about the locally-sourced labor?

**EPA:** SFS will provide the locally-sourced labor. EPA has directed them to various job training centers, such as the West Oakland Sustainability Alliance, Cypress Mandela Job Training Center, etc. If people are qualified and meet the requirements, they'll be potential candidates. SFS will hire people. EPA can communicate with SFS and be a liaison with the community to let them know when SFS is looking to hire.

**Question:** Can you tell us now what qualifications people will need?

**SFS:** We'll have a couple of teams working on each back yard at a time. Health & Safety training and HAZWOPER training is important, as SFS wants a safe and efficient team in place. EPA will require the workers to receive 24 hours of formal safety training. We are envisioning the following to start (but will work with EPA): 2 remediation teams, each team with a "field engineer" (college graduate engineer) that would look for utilities, oversee teams, etc. There will probably be 3

positions from the community per team: 1 rototiller and 2 physical laborers (responsible for calcium phosphate addition, restoration, etc). We will also need a secretary for the field office, and a mechanic for rototiller/decontamination/equipment maintenance. This will be a green project – we'll use solar for electricity – so we will be hiring an electrician. We have given EPA a list of approximately 8-10 jobs we would solicit from the community.

**Question:** Is there a mechanism in place to start this hiring process?

**EPA:** EPA will get the positions, skill sets, and hiring procedures from SFS and will get them to the community.

**Question:** Why will there be only 2 teams working at a time? Why can't we have more teams and get it done faster? Plus the more people you hire, the more trained people you have that are employable.

**EPA:** We are starting with 2 teams because that is manageable. We may add more teams if it is feasible and makes sense (not sacrificing quality). We are also trying not to add diesel-fueled trucks/backhoes, etc. to the extent practical.

**Question:** What will this ultimately look like, when the remediation team shows up at my house? Like a gardening company coming to your house? A flat bed truck coming to your house?

**EPA:** Email these questions to Steve Calanog (EPA) and he'll meet with SFS to work out the details.

**SFS:** There will be test plots that can be used to evaluate how things are working and what will work in the future.

**EPA:** We also want to work on internships, working with schools, etc. Nothing is formalized yet but we are open to internships (paid/unpaid, EPA/contract), a high school film group shadowing the documentary contractor, etc. EPA wants to share this experience with young people who are interested.

**Question:** Do the fish bones smell?

**EPA:** If you put your head in a bucket of fish bones, yes. But they're dried out so they don't smell when you're a few feet away. No, the treatment won't smell (although some people may be more sensitive to it).

**Question:** Will dogs eat the treated soil with fish bones?

**EPA:** We will have to see about that.

**Question:** The AMCO remediation is expected to be happening sometime very soon - will the residential lead yard work be coordinated?

**EPA:** Yes, the two projects are being coordinated. Also, entry/egress for the AMCO trucks will be on the Mandela side of the neighborhood.

#### **Anticipated Activities for Upcoming Weeks**

- Establish "Field Office" in the neighborhood
- Begin training of staff
- Begin work on demonstration plots
- Begin scheduling meetings with individual residents
  - Property owners are at their own leisure to schedule the work
  - Access agreements, restoration agreements, etc.

**Question:** Do you have a master list of residents? How do we know we're being included?

**EPA:** EPA has list of property owners and residents. If you live in the project area and are receiving mailings, you're included.

**Question:** Have the locations of the demo plots been determined? Will they be yards or empty lots that are visible?

**EPA:** There are 6-8 potential demo plots that have been identified. We are still welcoming ideas. Some are big lots that are visible, and some may be yards that are visible from the street.

**Resident:** Residents were talking about logistics with respect to the TASC website.

**EPA:** Yes we should figure out how to network and connect all the information services (Facebook, etc.)

### **John Schweitzer's presentation**

We are setting up a website for the lead project that could be expanded for AMCO if the residents like. The website is funded under the TASC contract. TASC contract requirements:

- 1) Website must be turned over to the CAG for them to manage
- 2) Needs to look like all other TASC web sites

Will use Joomla (freeware) to meet both these needs

- From EPA, we will get the schedule for everyone's home, what it will look like (pictures of completed projects, conceptual drawings)
- From the community, will get information going to EPA via a form (i.e., the schedule requested by resident, issues, etc.)
- Website design:
  - Center page: the CAG logo and over view of project & schedule.
  - Left side of page: schedule, garden options, construction photos, health protections, technical summary & detail, technical document archive.
  - Right side of page: Schedule your job, express your concern, blog sharing experiences.
- Work on the website will occur in three phases
  - Phase I – build base site (has started, will be done in 30 days)
  - Phase II – comment from community
  - Phase III – adjust and improve

**Resident:** The development of test plots will hopefully generate a lot of the info needed for the left side of the web site.

**SFS:** We will need to work together as we put together the schedules, etc so that we're on the same page.

**John Schweitzer:** There will be a form that EPA or the contractor can fill out on the website.

**Resident:** We're envisioning a community populated schedule.

**SFS:** Yes, but we'll also want to be efficient when we can (do similar yards at the same time) or take into account scheduling issues (rainstorms), etc.

**Question:** Is this website a counterpart to the community messaging contract or how do they relate?

**Resident:** We don't know. At some point we'll need to coordinate everything.

**Resident:** A number of houses in the neighborhood are changing hands – the new property owners will have to be brought up to date.

**Question:** Will there be a contract signed between property owners and EPA before work is done?

**EPA:** Yes. There will be an access agreement and a restoration agreement, as well as a final walkthrough to make sure both parties are satisfied.

### **Next Meeting**

The next lead meeting will be April 11, 2011. PLEASE NOTE: April 11 meeting has been cancelled due to possible government shutdown. Announcements will be sent out over email.